

Paul had a "desire to depart and to be with Christ," for he knew that "to be absent from the body" was "to be present with the Lord."

How consoling then the knowledge that the absent ones are with Jesus, safe in His arms. The stormy passage of life, its winds, its waves, its cares and crosses, exchanged for the haven of rest, of light and glory. Dear Reader, would you call back the dove which spread its wings and left the dove-cot for the realms of light and joy? Would you bring it back to the storm and tempest, the rough road and sandy desert? No; and if you would it would not return, for it has folded its pinions and is at rest with Jesus who redeemed it. "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God." If a child in glory is a child for ever; then

"The lily is as perfect as the oak,
The myrtle is as fragrant as the palm,
And Sharon's roses are as beautiful
As Lebanon's majestic cedar crown." *

In the case of the penitent thief and the statement of the Apostle how striking is the preservation of individuality. "This day shalt *thou* be with *me*." If Paul is present in the body, dwelling in it as in a house, —*he* is absent from the Lord, but if absent from the body *he* is present with the Lord. And these statements cannot be limited to a mere expression of safe-keeping, in view of the future resurrection state, but we may safely assure ourselves that nothing less than conscious existence of the individual with Christ is taught.

* Bickersteth's "Yesterday, To-day, and Forever."